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Report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People

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Letter of transmittal

[6 October 2015]

Mr. Secretary-General,

I have the honour to enclose herewith the report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for submission to the General Assembly in accordance with paragraph 2 of its resolution 69/20 of 25 November 2014.

The report covers the period from 7 October 2014 to 6 October 2015.

(*Signed*) Fodé **Seck**
Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the
Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People

His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon
Secretary-General of the United Nations
New York

Chapter I
Introduction

1. Among the developments that marked the reporting period were the efforts by the United Nations and the international community to support the reconstruction of the Gaza Strip following the Israeli military operations in the summer of 2014, which caused widespread destruction and physical and human devastation; the submission by the State of Palestine of documents to accede to a number of international treaties and conventions, including the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court; the Israeli parliamentary elections on 17 March and the subsequent formation of a right-wing Government under Benjamin Netanyahu; the further deterioration of the security situation in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, including the rise of settler violence and terror against Palestinian civilians; and endeavours for stronger involvement of the wider international community in the peace negotiations.

2. More than one year after the war on Gaza in the summer of 2014, the situation in the Gaza Strip remains very grave. Palestinian and international efforts to address the humanitarian situation and rebuild the lives, homes and livelihoods of the tens of thousands of people affected by the violence have been slow to proceed owing to the blockade and severe restrictions on the import of materials into Gaza imposed by Israel, the occupying Power, and also to unfulfilled donor pledges. As at August 2015, not a single one of the destroyed homes in Gaza had been rebuilt, and over 100,000 Palestinians are still homeless, forced to shelter in temporary housing with other families or in the ruins of their homes.

3. Israeli occupying forces continued to carry out frequent military raids and incursions in the West Bank, resulting in the killing and injuring of Palestinians, including children. Thousands of Palestinians, including women and children, were arrested during the reporting period, in addition to over 5,000 Palestinians who remain in Israeli jails and detention centres, many in administrative detention. Unarmed Palestinian civilians continued to be subjected to excessive force by Israeli forces during demonstrations against the prolonged occupation of their land. Israel continued to expand its illegal settlements in the West Bank, including in East Jerusalem, and approved plans to build thousands more new settlement units. Eleven years after the 2004 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice was rendered, the construction of the separation wall and its associated regime continue, fragmenting the Palestinian land and communities, obstructing movement and access, further isolating East Jerusalem and severely harming the socioeconomic conditions of the Palestinian people. During the reporting period, the situation in occupied East Jerusalem remained alarming, with increased numbers of incursions by extremist Israelis into the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound and acts of incitement and provocation, as well as continued land confiscations, excavations near holy sites, house demolitions, revocations of residency permits and evictions of Palestinian residents.

4. Palestinian State-building and institution-building efforts continued, yet were undermined by restrictions and obstacles imposed by Israel on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, which continued to prevent the free movement of persons and goods, economic activity and sustained development and growth. After the State of Palestine deposited instruments of accession to a number of international treaties and conventions, including the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court on

1 January 2015, to which it acceded the following week, Israel withheld the tax revenue that it collects on behalf of the Palestinian people pursuant to the 1994 Paris Protocol on Economic Relations, deepening the financial crisis of the Government of the State of Palestine, and did not release it until after the Israeli elections, following intense international pressure. On 25 June, the State of Palestine submitted a file to the International Criminal Court detailing possible war crimes in Gaza and settlement construction in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

5. Following the suspension of bilateral and United States-mediated peace talks by Israel in April 2014 and the subsequent war on Gaza in July and August 2014, Member States and regional organizations embarked upon efforts to mobilize broader, more substantive international support to the peace process. These include proposals for the Security Council to shoulder its responsibilities and redouble efforts to enforce its resolutions on the question of Palestine, as well as enlisting the support of regional stakeholders and organizations in order to break the deadlock and cycle of violence and help to foster an environment that is conducive to peace. During the reporting period, Saint Lucia, Sweden and the Holy See officially recognized the State of Palestine, and a number of European parliaments passed non-binding resolutions calling upon their Governments to do so.

6. During the reporting period, the activities of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and its Bureau continued to draw the international community's attention to the issues of immediate urgency, such as the dire humanitarian situation and the reconstruction of the Gaza Strip, the international efforts to revitalize negotiations and the need to address ongoing Israeli settlement activities in the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem, with the objective of mobilizing wide support for the Palestinian people's inalienable rights, including the right to self-determination and independence, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, international law and the provisions and calls made in numerous relevant United Nations resolutions. The Committee monitored the situation and the political developments on the ground, implemented its programme of international meetings and conferences and held consultations with representatives of Governments, national parliaments and interparliamentary organizations, as well as civil society. The Committee continued to reaffirm and promote the United Nations position that a just and permanent settlement of the question of Palestine could be reached only by ending the Israeli occupation that began in 1967, achieving the full independence of the State of Palestine on the basis of the pre-1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital and reaching a just and agreed solution to the issue of Palestine refugees on the basis of General Assembly resolution 194 (III).

7. Until the end of 2014, the Committee continued its series of events within the framework of the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. An international meeting of parliamentarians organized by the Committee at United Nations Headquarters in November focused on their role in ensuring respect for international law. An international conference organized by the Committee in Seville, Spain, in December was aimed at better understanding the role of local governments and civil society organizations in the struggle for the realization of Palestinian rights. A seminar on assistance to the Palestinian people held in Vienna in March 2015 focused on key aspects of the reconstruction of Gaza. The Committee held a round table in May at The Hague, Netherlands, on legal aspects of the question of Palestine, followed in July by an international meeting in support of

Israeli-Palestinian peace held in Moscow. An international meeting held in September in Brussels, organized in cooperation with the League of Arab States and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), focused on the issue of Israeli settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem as an obstacle to peace.

Chapter II
Mandate of the Committee

8. The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People was established by the General Assembly by resolution 3376 (XXX) of 10 November 1975, with the task of recommending a programme designed to enable the Palestinian people to exercise its inalienable rights, as recognized by the Assembly in its resolution 3236 (XXIX) of 22 November 1974. Further information is available on the website maintained by the Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat at http://unispal.un.org/unispal.nsf/com.htm.

9. On 25 November 2014, the General Assembly renewed the mandate of the Committee (resolution 69/20), requested the Secretary-General to continue to provide the Division for Palestinian Rights with the necessary resources to carry out its programme of work (resolution 69/21) and requested the continuation of the special information programme on the question of Palestine of the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat (resolution 69/22). The Assembly also adopted resolution 69/23, entitled "Peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine".

Chapter III
Organization of work

A. Membership and officers

10. The Committee is composed of the following Member States: Afghanistan, Belarus, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Cuba, Cyprus, Ecuador, Guinea, Guyana, India, Indonesia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mali, Malta, Namibia, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Pakistan, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of).

11. The observers at the Committee meetings are: Algeria, Bangladesh, Bulgaria, China, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka, the Syrian Arab Republic, the United Arab Emirates, Viet Nam and Yemen, as well as the State of Palestine, the African Union, the League of Arab States and OIC.

12. At its 368th meeting, on 10 February 2015, the Committee re-elected Fodé Seck (Senegal) as Chair, Zahir Tanin (Afghanistan), Rodolfo Reyes Rodríguez (Cuba), Desra Percaya (Indonesia), Wilfried Emvula (Namibia) and María Rubiales de Chamorro (Nicaragua) as Vice-Chairs, and Christopher Grima (Malta) as Rapporteur.

B. Participation in the work of the Committee

13. As in previous years, the Committee reconfirmed that all States Members of the United Nations and observers wishing to participate in the work of the Committee were welcome to do so. In accordance with established practice, the State of Palestine participated in the work of the Committee as an observer, attended all of its meetings and gave briefings, made observations and developed proposals for consideration by the Committee and its Bureau.

Chapter IV
Review of the situation relating to the question of Palestine

Political developments

14. During the reporting period, a number of States members of the European Union moved forward on the path to recognizing the State of Palestine. Sweden officially recognized the State of Palestine on 30 October 2014. The parliaments of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (13 October), Spain (18 November), France (2 December), Ireland (10 December), Portugal (12 December), Belgium (5 February 2015) and Italy (27 February 2015) adopted non-binding resolutions that call upon their respective Governments to recognize the State of Palestine. The Holy See and Saint Lucia officially recognized the State of Palestine on 26 June and 14 September respectively.

15. On 17 December, Switzerland, the depositary of the Geneva Conventions, convened, in Geneva, the Conference of High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention, at which a declaration was adopted in which the high contracting parties emphasized the continued applicability and relevance of the Fourth Geneva Convention and called upon the occupying Power to fully respect the Convention in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem.

16. On 30 December, the Security Council failed to adopt a draft resolution (S/2014/916) calling for a final status agreement and an end to the Israeli occupation by the end of 2017, owing to the lack of the required number of nine favourable votes. The following day, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas signed instruments of accession to the following 18 international conventions and treaties: Convention on the Political Rights of Women; Convention on the Recognition and Enforcement of Foreign Arbitral Awards (the "New York Convention"); Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal; Convention on Biological Diversity and the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety to the Convention on Biological Diversity; Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the Protection of Victims of Non-International Armed Conflicts (Protocol II); Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the Adoption of an Additional Distinctive Emblem (Protocol III); Convention on the Law of the Non-Navigational Uses of International Watercourses; Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Crimes against Internationally Protected Persons, including Diplomatic Agents; United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime; Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel and the Optional Protocol thereto; United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea; Convention on the Non-Applicability of Statutory Limitations to War Crimes and Crimes against Humanity; Agreement on the Privileges and Immunities of the International Criminal Court; Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court; Declaration in accordance with the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court; Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects; Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons; Convention on Cluster Munitions.

17. On 3 January 2015, in retaliation against the Palestinian move to join the International Criminal Court, Israel decided to freeze approximately $127 million in

tax revenues for the month of December, collected on behalf of the Palestinian people under the Paris Protocol to the Oslo Accords. The freeze deepened the Palestinian financial crisis and continued until the adoption of an agreement on 17 April between Israel and the State of Palestine under which Israel transferred more than $470 million that had previously been withheld.

18. After the general elections in Israel on 17 March, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu continued in his post. Many hardline statements, put forward in the final days of campaigning by the Prime Minister, raised serious doubts about Israel's commitment to the two-State solution. The new Government of Israel was confirmed on 14 May; its guidelines state that it will strive for peace with the Palestinians and all its neighbours, while safeguarding the security and historical and national interests of Israel. In the following months, Prime Minister Netanyahu reaffirmed his commitment to the idea of a sustainable two-State solution.

19. After its general elections, Israel implemented measures to ease restrictions on Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza, particularly during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, although some have been revoked ostensibly in response to rocket fire from Gaza. In July, the Government of Israel decided to grant an additional 8,000 new work permits for Palestinians from the West Bank, bringing the number of permits issued for employment in Israel to a new high of approximately 60,000.

20. On 10 September, the General Assembly adopted resolution 69/320, in which it decided that the flags of non-member observer States maintaining permanent observer missions at United Nations Headquarters would be raised at Headquarters and United Nations offices following the flags of the States Members of the Organization. On 30 September, the flag of Palestine was raised at United Nations Headquarters in the presence of President Mahmoud Abbas.

Reconstruction of Gaza

21. On 12 October 2014, at the Cairo International Conference on Palestine: Reconstructing Gaza, which was co-organized by Egypt and Norway and focused on the reconstruction of Gaza, some 50 donor countries pledged $5.4 billion in relief funds for the Occupied Palestinian Territory, of which $3.5 billion ($2.5 billion in new commitments) was pledged for Gaza. These funds for Gaza represent only 63 per cent of the cost of reconstruction and thus fall short of the funds needed to return Gaza to the situation prior to the Israeli military operation, when socioeconomic conditions were already at their worst since 1967.

22. The Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism, the temporary agreement between Israel and the State of Palestine brokered by the United Nations in September 2014 with the objective of enabling construction and reconstruction work on the large scale required in the Gaza Strip, started slowly, hampered by a delay in the disbursement of donor funds, but scaled up in the first quarter of 2015.

23. In June 2015, Israel and the State of Palestine reached an agreement on the "residential stream" of the Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism, a new mechanism to allow Palestinians in Gaza access to needed construction material for the reconstruction of fully destroyed homes and for new construction. As at 10 August 2015, a total of 89,431 households out of the 100,063 affected had procured the materials necessary to repair their homes under the mechanism's shelter stream. Under the residential stream, by the end of August, over 2,600 housing units had

been cleared for construction; the required construction materials have been procured for more than 1,200 of those units and, in many cases, the reconstruction of the homes has commenced.

24. According to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), by May, 20 per cent of Gaza's population, or 360,000 people, needed treatment for mental health conditions, and 400,000 children were in need of immediate psychosocial support. Moreover, in its annual report, UNCTAD reported that the Israeli blockade, three major wars and the social, health and security-related ramifications of high population density and overcrowding threatened to render Gaza uninhabitable by humans by 2020, when the population is expected to increase to 2.1 million.

25. There have been a number of significant achievements since the end of hostilities in August 2014. Notably, the last internally displaced persons left United Nations collective centres on 17 June 2015. In addition, as at 10 August, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) had removed 414,000 tons of rubble out of an estimated 2 million tons, and a similar amount has been removed by the Government and the private sector. According to the United Nations Mine Action Service, since December 2014, 592 explosive remnants of war risk assessments covering 1,480 dwellings have been conducted. Of an overall estimated 7,000 explosive remnants of war from the 2014 conflict, approximately one third have been cleared either directly or under the supervision of the United Nations Mine Action Service.

Palestinian State-building

26. During the reporting period, the Palestinian State-building efforts continued, supported by the international community. The first meeting of the Cabinet of the Government of national consensus was held in Gaza on 9 October 2014. Palestinian Prime Minister Hamdallah conducted his second visit to Gaza on 25 March 2015, and on 19 April, a delegation of Palestinian ministers travelled to Gaza to begin a process to reintegrate public sector employees. On 17 June, the Palestinian Government of national consensus, formed on 2 June 2014, resigned after President Mahmoud Abbas said that it was unable to operate in the Gaza Strip. On 22 June, the Executive Committee of the Palestinian Liberation Organization decided to establish a committee to consult with all Palestinian factions in order to form a national unity Government. On 31 July, the Government of the State of Palestine was reshuffled and five new ministers, for agriculture, education, local governance, national economy and transportation, were appointed.

27. On 29 January 2015, the International Monetary Fund reported that in 2014, the Palestinian economy had contracted for the first time since 2006. According to UNCTAD, socioeconomic conditions are at their lowest point since 1967. The World Bank assessed that unemployment and poverty have increased markedly. In the fourth quarter of 2014, unemployment in Gaza reached 43 per cent, the highest in the world, with youth unemployment at a staggering 60 per cent. The aggregate poverty rate for Gaza and the West Bank stood at 25 per cent. The economic gap between Gaza and the West Bank is growing, owing primarily to the impact of the ongoing restriction on the free movement of people and goods to and from the Gaza Strip.

28. The socioeconomic prospects for the immediate future remain bleak, owing to volatile political conditions, reduced aid flows, the slow pace of reconstruction in Gaza and the lingering effects of Israel's withholding of Palestinian tax revenue during the first four months of 2015. The latter caused an economic crisis in the Palestinian territory, which in Gaza was exacerbated by an equally severe financial crisis related to the lack of civil service reform. The overall efficacy of donor support, however, continues to be seriously undermined by the occupation, rather than by the inadequacy of the policies of the State of Palestine or poor donor coordination. The fiscal burden of the humanitarian crises and the occupation-related fiscal losses have diverted donor aid from development to humanitarian interventions, including emergency aid, and budget support. No amount of aid would be sufficient to place any economy on the path of sustainable development under conditions of frequent military strikes and destruction of infrastructure, isolation from global markets, fragmentation of domestic markets, and confiscation of and denial of access to national natural resources.

Security

29. The reporting period was marked by continued tensions, military incursions and raids by the Israeli occupying forces, and clashes with Palestinian youths and protesters in many parts of East Jerusalem and the West Bank, which have been taking place on an almost daily basis. According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs of the Secretariat, as at 28 September, Israeli forces had killed 44 Palestinians and injured 3,387, including children. On 10 December, Palestinian Minister Ziad Abu Ein died during a confrontation with Israeli occupying forces in the course of a protest against Israel's settlements in the West Bank. In a positive development, since the ceasefire of 26 August 2014, violence across the Occupied Palestinian Territory has declined, with June 2015 recording the lowest number of Palestinian injuries in more than three years. The recent aggravation of tensions, however, especially in occupied East Jerusalem and at the holy sites are cause for concern and risk leading to a further destabilization of an already fragile situation.

30. In Gaza, there have been allegations that Palestinian factions rearmed after the Gaza war of the summer of 2014. There has been test-firing of rockets into the Mediterranean Sea. Militants began firing rockets towards Israel in October and on 20 December, Israel conducted its first air strike on Gaza since the ceasefire of 26 August. Israel also continues to conduct frequent incursions into the Gaza border area using military vehicles and continues its harassment of and shooting at unarmed farmers in the "no-go zone" near the Gaza-Israel border and its harassment of fishermen inside the Gaza fishing zone.

31. As at 1 August 2015, unexploded ordnance from the numerous Israeli military incursions and wars on Gaza had killed 2 Palestinians, including 1 child, and injured 40, including 21 children.

32. In a report submitted to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in April, the United Nations Headquarters Board of Inquiry concluded that some incidents during the 2014 Gaza conflict at schools of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), in which at least 44 Palestinians were killed and 227 injured, were attributable to the Israeli military. On 14 June, Israel published a report on its internal investigations into its actions during the

conflict, including the shelling of United Nations facilities, in which it was concluded that Israel's military actions had been "lawful" and "legitimate".

33. In its report issued on 24 June, the United Nations Independent Commission of Inquiry on the 2014 Gaza Conflict (A/HRC/29/52), which was established by the Human Rights Council, stated that it had gathered substantial information pointing to serious violations of international law by both Israel and Palestinian armed groups, some of which might amount to war crimes. The Commission expressed concern that impunity prevailed across the board for violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law allegedly committed by Israeli forces, many of which constituted grave breaches of the Fourth Geneva Convention and thus might amount to war crimes, including deliberate attacks against civilians and civilian objects and wanton destruction of civilian property. With regard to Palestinian armed groups, the Commission expressed serious concern at the inherently indiscriminate nature of most of the projectiles directed towards Israel and at the targeting of civilians, which might amount to a war crime.

34. On 29 June, Israeli forces detained a Swedish-flagged vessel in international waters 100 nautical miles off the coast of Gaza and forced it to sail to the Israeli port of Ashdod. The vessel had been part of a four-boat flotilla aiming to bring humanitarian aid to Gaza and protest the Israeli blockade. The other ships turned back. Among the detainees were former Tunisian President Moncef Marzouki, Spanish Member of the European Parliament Ana Miranda, and Arab Member of the Israeli Knesset Basel Ghattas, along with several civil society representatives.

35. In response to intensifying acts of violence and terror, in particular by Israeli settlers, as reflected in the arson attack of 31 July 2015 against a Palestinian home in Duma in the West Bank, in which an 18-month-old boy, Ali Dawabsha, was burned alive, his father and mother died from their injuries and their 4-year-old son was orphaned, the Government of Israel decided on 2 August to strengthen the legal and institutional means of addressing terrorism by Jewish extremists, but also extended the use of the system of prolonged administrative detention, which is used almost exclusively to detain Palestinians without charge for long periods.

Jerusalem

36. Provocations and attacks against religious sites and incitement by Israeli religious extremists and officials escalated in November 2014, leading to the highest monthly number of Palestinian casualties (over 1,000). On 13 November, after a trilateral meeting with King Abdullah II of Jordan and United States Secretary of State John Kerry, Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu gave assurances that there would be no changes to the status quo of the holy sites in Jerusalem, in accordance with its agreement with Jordan. Constructive steps promised to de-escalate the tensions surrounding the holy sites in occupied East Jerusalem included a decrease in the number of Jewish activists at the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound, the lifting of access restrictions and, for the first time since 2007, permission for Palestinians from the Gaza Strip to worship at the Al-Aqsa Mosque.

37. On 18 November, a retaliation attack on a synagogue in West Jerusalem killed five Israelis and injured several others. It was followed on 29 November by an arson attack and the vandalization of a joint Jewish-Arab school in Jerusalem, allegedly perpetrated by Jewish extremists.

38. Provocative visits to the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound in occupied East Jerusalem by Jewish extremists and officials, under the protection of Israeli occupying forces, continued throughout the reporting period and repeatedly led to violent confrontations with Palestinian worshippers. In late September and early October, the confrontations escalated, concomitantly with clashes between Palestinians and Israeli settlers and increased Israeli military raids in Palestinian cities, towns, villages and refugee camps in the West Bank, resulting in a number of civilians killed or injured. This was followed by the decision by the Government of Israel to substantially increase the number of Israeli security forces in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and to impose further restrictions on access to the Old City of Jerusalem for non-resident Palestinians.

Settlements and settler-related incidents

39. Notwithstanding the international calls for a cessation of all settlement activities, which constitute violations of international law, namely, the Fourth Geneva Convention, and Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, Israel continued its policy of illegal settlement-building in the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem. At the end of 2014, according to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, there were 150 Israeli settlements, 16 of which are in East Jerusalem, with a settler population of around 600,000, of whom 210,000 live in East Jerusalem. According to the Israel Central Bureau of Statistics of Israel, during the fourth quarter of 2014 and the first half of 2015, the construction of 1,260 structures was begun and 1,498 structures were completed. According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, settlers outnumber Palestinians in Area C, which comprises 61 per cent of the West Bank, with 341,000 settlers living in 235 settlements and so-called settlement outposts, compared with 300,000 Palestinians.

40. According to the Israeli non-governmental organization Peace Now, in 2014, settlement construction in occupied East Jerusalem grew by 260 per cent, from 464 settlement buildings in 2013 to 1,209 in 2014. After accelerating the construction of 1,000 Jewish settler homes on 27 October, in November, Israel advanced plans for 500 more settler homes in the city. Tendering of new settlement construction also accelerated throughout the West Bank and East Jerusalem, with 4,599 units overall tendered in 2014 compared with 3,710 in 2013, a 20 per cent increase, and 2,359 units tendered in the West Bank in 2014 compared with 1,695 in 2013, a 40 per cent increase.

41. On 25 December, the Israeli Supreme Court ordered the evacuation and demolition of Amona, the largest settlement outpost in the West Bank, within two years. On 30 January 2015, the Government of Israel decided to issue tenders for the additional construction of about 450 residential units in West Bank settlements, and on 8 February, the Jerusalem municipality approved the construction of 64 Jewish settler homes north of the city.

42. Shortly after the formation of the new Government in May 2015, Israel approved the construction of 900 settler homes in occupied East Jerusalem. Following the decision on 29 July by the Israeli Supreme Court that two buildings in the West Bank settlement of Beit El adjacent to the city of Ramallah, which had been built on private Palestinian land, should be destroyed, the Israeli Prime Minister approved, the same day, the immediate construction of 300 housing units in

the same settlement and advanced plans for 504 new housing units in Israeli settlement areas in occupied East Jerusalem.

43. Israeli settlers continued to harass and attack Palestinian civilians, especially farmers and herders, with clashes occurring on an almost daily basis. According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, as at 28 September, a total of 229 settler-related incidents had occurred during the reporting period, causing either Palestinian casualties, including to children, and/or damages to Palestinian property or land, averaging 19 each month. These included the destruction of Palestinian houses, mosques, churches and orchards, many in so-called price tag attacks, with the aim of scaring Palestinians off their lands and forcing Palestinians to end their resistance against the Israeli settlement enterprise. On 12 November, suspected Jewish settlers torched a mosque near Ramallah. In January 2015 alone, some 5,600 trees were uprooted or vandalized. On 31 July, an arson attack against a Palestinian family in the occupied West Bank committed by extremist Jewish settlers killed an 18-month-old baby and his father and mother and critically injured the 4-year-old brother, who is the only surviving member of the family.

44. According to a report by Israeli human rights organization Yesh Din published in May, only 7.4 per cent of Israeli police investigations initiated in the West Bank following complaints by Palestinian victims of offences committed against them or their property by Israeli settlers result in indictments. The remaining investigations have been closed, in most cases (some 85 per cent) owing to investigative failure.

Demolitions and displacements

45. Israel has continued its policy of demolition of Palestinian homes and structures built without Israeli-issued permits. Such permits are nearly impossible for Palestinians living under Israeli occupation to obtain. It has also reinstated the practice of punitive demolitions after having halted it almost completely for close to a decade. In August, the Israeli Supreme Court legitimized the applicability of the 1951 Absentee's Property Law to Palestinian property in East Jerusalem when the owner is residing elsewhere in the West Bank, allowing for the expropriation of property from Palestinians who have become absentees through no fault of their own. Israeli courts continued the practice of evicting Palestinian residents and owners of properties in East Jerusalem that, prior to 1948, had belonged to Jewish residents, while Palestinians cannot avail themselves of the same procedure, namely, reclaiming property previously under Palestinian ownership and now under Jewish-Israeli control.

46. According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, as at 28 September, a total of 590 Palestinian structures had been demolished during the reporting period, of which 106 were in East Jerusalem, displacing 765 Palestinians in total and 96 from East Jerusalem.

47. Some 7,000 Palestinian Bedouins in 46 residential areas of the West Bank are threatened with forcible transfer, linked to the expansion of illegal settlements and the wall in the E1 area, east of Jerusalem.

Palestinian prisoners

48. According to the Israeli human rights organization B'Tselem, at the end of July, a total of 5,369 Palestinian detainees and prisoners were being held in Israeli

prisons, 346 of them from the Gaza Strip. An additional 972 Palestinians were being held in Israel Prison Service facilities for being in Israel illegally, 13 of them from the Gaza Strip. A total of 342 of those Palestinian prisoners are being held in administrative detention. On 12 July, the Israeli authorities released the Palestinian prisoner Khader Adnan, who had been arrested and placed in administrative detention in July 2014, after a 56-day hunger strike.

49. On 20 July, the Israeli Parliament amended the Penal Code to extend harsh punishments for throwing stones at moving vehicles, allowing sentences of up to 20 years, which is likely to disproportionally affect Palestinian children. On 30 July, the Knesset approved a law to permit force-feeding of prisoners on hunger strike under certain conditions, which potentially affects all detainees but particularly Palestinian detainees who have resorted to hunger strikes to protest their conditions, including their prolonged administrative detention without charge. The adoption of the law has led to widespread protests, including by the Israeli Medical Association, which refuses to comply as that would constitute a breach of the Hippocratic Oath.

Water

50. According to the Emergency Water and Sanitation Hygiene Group, one year after the Gaza war of 2014, which resulted in $34 million in damage to major water and sanitation infrastructure, some 120,000 Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, or 7 per cent of the population in the territory, are still not connected to the water network, while 23 per cent remain disconnected from the sewage system. As a result of the unrepaired war damages to wastewater facilities, untreated and partially treated wastewater is discharged into the environment, infiltrating and polluting the coastal aquifer, the sole freshwater source for the Gaza Strip, making 96 per cent of the water from the aquifer unfit for human consumption. According to the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, the water installations operate at approximately 50 per cent capacity owing to energy shortages and maintenance challenges caused by shortages of parts as a result of the blockade. Some 65 per cent of the population receives several hours of water once every three or four days and 15 per cent receives water for six to eight hours every day.

United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

51. UNRWA continued to provide extensive services and emergency assistance to over 5 million Palestine refugees in all its fields of operations in Jordan, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic and the Occupied Palestinian Territory. While it endeavours to serve this community in accordance with its General Assembly mandate, UNRWA is confronted with the most severe financial crisis since its establishment in 1949, which is jeopardizing its ability to live up to core responsibilities in providing basic education, health care and relief and social services. Although donor responses to this crisis in August helped UNRWA to avert the shutdown or delayed opening of its schools in all fields of operation, the financial deficit continues to affect operations, requiring more substantive solutions to the chronic underfunding of the Agency.

52. One year after the Israeli military operations of July and August 2014, the devastating conflict continues to have severe implications for the work of UNRWA in the Gaza Strip. A total of 9,117 Palestine refugee homes were totally demolished and 138,391 damaged during the conflict. The level of destruction, coupled with the

worsening socioeconomic situation of Gaza Strip residents in the context of the blockade, presents an extremely challenging environment for Palestine refugees in the Gaza Strip, severely affecting their well-being, socioeconomic conditions and future potential.

53. In the light of the escalating conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic, the Agency is particularly concerned about the more than 560,000 Palestine refugees who have lived in the country for decades, over 50 per cent of whom have now been displaced within the Syrian Arab Republic, with an additional 12 per cent forced to seek refuge in neighbouring countries. In Lebanon, UNRWA has registered 45,000 Palestine refugees from the Syrian Arab Republic, and 15,000 Palestine refugees in Jordan and some 1,000 in the Gaza Strip have approached UNRWA for assistance. In Egypt, 4,000 Palestine refugees are also reported to have come from the Syrian Arab Republic and large groups are found further afield. Inside the Syrian Arab Republic, some 65,000 Palestine refugees are in hard-to-reach areas, including Yarmouk camp on the outskirts of Damascus, which has witnessed a dramatic escalation of violence that continues to endanger the lives of 18,000 Palestine refugees and Syrian residents of the camp. Although it has had limited access since July 2013, in 2015, UNRWA was able to serve the vast majority (over 90 per cent) of the Palestine refugee population in the Syrian Arab Republic with regular humanitarian assistance and services. However, the access situation declined significantly during the summer of 2015, particularly in the Dera'a and Aleppo areas.

54. The Committee again expresses its appreciation for the dedication of UNRWA and its entire staff to its mission and calls upon all Member States to address the critical financial situation in which the Agency finds itself, to enable the continued provision of vital support to the Palestine refugee population in all fields of operation.

United Nations Development Programme/Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

55. UNDP, through its Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People, continued to respond to the development needs of the State of Palestine and its national consensus government. In support of the Palestinian statehood agenda, UNDP focuses on democratic governance and the rule of law, economic empowerment and private sector development, environment and management of natural resources, as well as public and social infrastructure. Notwithstanding the blockade of the Gaza Strip, UNDP is also alleviating the suffering of the population in the coastal enclave by enhancing livelihoods through emergency employment, cash assistance, the reconstruction of shelters and schools, the removal of rubble, and institutional integration. The Programme places empowerment, resilience and sustainability at the centre of its operation and focuses on three priority areas: the Gaza Strip, East Jerusalem and Area C of the West Bank, where the needs are the greatest.

56. The Committee remained appreciative of the important work of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. It noted that the consolidated appeal for 2015 focused on the delivery of humanitarian assistance, increased protection of civilians, enhanced monitoring and reporting on the humanitarian situation and the strengthening of United Nations humanitarian coordination structures.

Chapter V
Action taken by the Committee

A. Action taken in accordance with General Assembly resolution 69/20

1. Action taken in the Security Council

57. During the open debates at the Security Council held on 21 October 2014, 15 January 2015, 21 April 2015 and 23 July 2015, the Chair of the Committee delivered a statement (see S/PV.7281; S/PV.7360; S/PV.7430; S/PV.7490).

2. Action taken by the Bureau of the Committee

58. On 10 November 2014, the Bureau of the Committee issued a statement on the situation in East Jerusalem (GA/PAL/1315). On 18 December, the Bureau issued a statement welcoming the Declaration of the Conference of High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention (GA/PAL/1323).

B. Action taken by the Committee and the Division for Palestinian Rights in accordance with General Assembly resolutions 69/20 and 69/21

1. Committee meetings at Headquarters

59. During the reporting period, the Committee held periodic meetings at United Nations Headquarters in New York. At its 366th meeting, on 19 November 2014, the Committee approved for submission to the General Assembly four draft resolutions entitled "Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People", "Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat", "Special information programme on the question of Palestine of the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat" and "Peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine". At its 368th meeting, on 10 February 2015, attended by the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, the Committee re-elected its Chair, Vice-Chairs and Rapporteur. At its 369th meeting on 1 May 2015, the Director of the UNRWA New York Office addressed the Committee on the occasion of the sixty-fifth anniversary of the commencement of the Agency's operations.

60. In addition to its periodic meetings, during the reporting period, the Committee organized the following events at United Nations Headquarters in New York within the framework of the 2014 International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People:

(a) Lecture by Noam Chomsky, Professor Emeritus of Linguistics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 14 October 2014;

(b) Fashion show by Jamal Taslaq, Palestinian-Italian designer, 10 November 2014.

2. Programme of international meetings and conferences

61. During the reporting period, the following international events were held under the auspices of the Committee:

(a) United Nations International Meeting of Parliamentarians in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace, United Nations Headquarters, New York, 21 November 2014;

(b) International Conference of Local Governments and Civil Society Organizations in Support of Palestinian Rights, Seville, Spain, 2 and 3 December 2014;

(c) United Nations Seminar on Assistance to the Palestinian People, Vienna, 31 March and 1 April 2015;

(d) United Nations Round Table on Legal Aspects of the Question of Palestine, The Hague, Netherlands, 20 to 22 May 2015;

(e) United Nations International Meeting in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace, Moscow, 1 and 2 July 2015;

(f) International Meeting on the Question of Palestine, Brussels, 7 and 8 September 2015;

(g) Consultations of the Committee delegation with civil society organizations active on the Question of Palestine, Brussels, 9 September 2015.

62. The above-mentioned events were attended by representatives of Governments, intergovernmental organizations and United Nations system entities, as well as parliamentarians and representatives of civil society and the media. Detailed information about the meetings is being issued in the form of publications of the Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat and is available on the "Question of Palestine" website maintained by the Division.

63. In the margins of the United Nations Seminar on Assistance to the Palestinian People held in Austria, the Committee delegation met with high-ranking officials of the Federal Ministry for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs of Austria. In the margins of the United Nations Round Table on Legal Aspects of the Question of Palestine held in The Hague, the Committee delegation met with high-level officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands and of the European External Action Service. In the margins of the United Nations International Meeting in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace in Moscow, the Committee delegation held meetings with high-ranking officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States and the Assistant Secretary-General of OIC, respectively. In the margins of the International Meeting on the Question of Palestine held in Brussels, the Committee delegation met with officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation of Belgium.

3. Cooperation with intergovernmental organizations

64. Throughout the year, the Committee continued its cooperation with the African Union, the European Union, the League of Arab States, the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and OIC. The Committee is appreciative of the active participation of their representatives in the various international events held under its auspices and the co-sponsorship provided by the League of Arab States and OIC in organizing the International Meeting on the Question of Palestine held in Brussels in September.

4. Cooperation with civil society

Civil society organizations

65. The Committee continued its cooperation with civil society organizations worldwide. Civil society representatives participated in all international meetings organized under the auspices of the Committee. On 9 September, consultations between the Bureau of the Committee and civil society organizations were held in Brussels. The Committee commends the important work of civil society organizations and encourages them to continue contributing to efforts aimed at achieving a comprehensive, just, lasting and peaceful solution to the question of Palestine in all its aspects and achieving the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

66. The Committee maintained its cooperation with national, regional and international coordinating mechanisms and established new liaisons with a large number of individual organizations.

67. The Working Group of the Committee, chaired by the representative of Malta, met periodically and hosted two briefings by civil society representatives at United Nations Headquarters in New York.

68. During the reporting period, three civil society organizations were accredited to the Committee and two organizations became observers.

69. The Division for Palestinian Rights maintained a civil society page (http://unispal.un.org/unispal.nsf/ngo.htm) on the "Question of Palestine" website as an outreach tool towards civil society organizations and to foster civil society networking and cooperation.

70. The Division maintained its Facebook, Twitter and YouTube pages to disseminate information about the work of the Committee, and the United Nations as a whole, on the question of Palestine. In addition, the Division continued to publish the periodic online bulletin *NGO Action News*, reaching out to more than 1,000 civil society organizations around the world, in order to catalogue and publicize civil society initiatives.

Parliaments, interparliamentary organizations and local governments

71. The Committee continued to attach great importance to developing its liaison with national and regional parliaments and their organizations. Representatives of parliaments and interparliamentary organizations participated in international events organized by the Committee during the reporting period. Among others, members of the Palestinian Legislative Council, the Israeli Knesset, the parliaments of Indonesia, Ireland, Jordan, Malta, Mexico, Pakistan, South Africa, Sweden, the regional parliament of Andalusia in Spain, as well as the European Parliament, the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the Arab Inter-Parliamentary Union and the French Senate participated in the international meetings held under the auspices of the Committee.

5. Research, monitoring and publications

72. The Division carried out research and monitoring activities and responded to requests for information and briefings on the question of Palestine. Under the guidance of the Committee, which reiterated the relevance of the research, monitoring and publications programme, it also prepared the publications listed below for dissemination:

(a) Monthly bulletin on action taken by the United Nations system and intergovernmental organizations relevant to the question of Palestine;

(b) Monthly chronology of events relating to the question of Palestine based on media reports and other sources;

(c) Reports of international meetings and conferences organized under the auspices of the Committee;

(d) Special bulletin and information notes on the observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People;

(e) Periodic reviews of developments related to the Middle East peace process;

(f) Annual compilation of resolutions and decisions of the General Assembly and the Security Council relating to the question of Palestine.

6. United Nations Information System on the Question of Palestine

73. The Division for Palestinian Rights, in cooperation with relevant technical and library services of the United Nations Secretariat, continued to administer, maintain, expand and develop the "Question of Palestine" website (http://unispal.un.org/unispal.nsf/home.htm) and UNISPAL. That included the ongoing maintenance and upgrading of the technical components of the system and involved the expansion of the document collection to include relevant new and old United Nations and other documents.

7. Training programme for staff of the Government of the State of Palestine

74. The Division conducted the annual training programme for staff of the Government of the State of Palestine. Two staff members of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs are in the process of completing a six-week training programme at Headquarters in New York (7 September to 16 October) and an additional two staff members will complete the same programme between 19 October and 27 November. The training will allow the Palestinian staff to familiarize themselves with various aspects of the work of the Secretariat and other United Nations organs and bodies, including the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council. The training is financially supported by the OPEC Fund for International Development.

8. International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People

75. The International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People was observed on 24 November 2014 at Headquarters in New York, on 26 November at the United Nations Office at Geneva and on 28 November at the United Nations Office at Vienna. At Headquarters, the Committee held a special meeting and organized a photo exhibit entitled "The Long Journey" in cooperation with UNRWA and the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat, as well as a musical performance by the Joubran Trio in cooperation with the Permanent Observer Mission of the State of Palestine to the United Nations. The Committee noted with appreciation that the International Day of Solidarity had also been observed by United Nations Information Centres and other bodies in many cities throughout the world. Details on the observance are contained in the special bulletin issued by the Division.

Chapter VI

Action taken by the Department of Public Information in accordance with General Assembly resolution 69/22

76. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 69/22, the Department of Public Information continued to implement its special information programme on the question of Palestine.

77. On 26 and 27 May 2015, the Department held its annual United Nations International Media Seminar on Peace in the Middle East, in Astana, in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan. The seminar was attended by journalists, former and current policymakers, think tank members, academics and students from France, Israel, Kazakhstan, the United States of America and the State of Palestine. The event brought together some 350 participants.

78. The Department's annual five-week training programme for Palestinian journalists was organized in New York and Washington, D.C., from 3 November to 5 December 2014. The selected group of nine Palestinian journalists attended a series of briefings by United Nations officials and media industry leaders. They also worked through an intensive curriculum with regular workshops, assignments and final projects.

79. A number of outreach events to commemorate the 2014 International Day of Solidarity and the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People were also organized both at Headquarters and in other locations through the global network of the United Nations Information Centres of the Department of Public Information.

80. In New York, the Department, in conjunction with UNRWA and the Division for Palestinian Rights, arranged for the display of the "Long Journey" exhibit in the Visitors' Lobby of United Nations Headquarters as part of the commemoration of Solidarity Day, from November 2014 to January 2015.

81. Guided tour routes for visitors to United Nations Headquarters continued to include a stop at the permanent exhibit "The Question of Palestine and the United Nations". During the reporting period, over 200,000 visitors took the guided tour.

82. The question of Palestine, the International Day and the Year of Solidarity were all promoted widely on the multilingual United Nations website, through United Nations social media accounts managed by the Department of Public Information and through the Department's traditional media platforms, including United Nations Radio, United Nations Television and the United Nations News Centre.

83. United Nations Television produced a special edition of its 21st Century television series, entitled "Palestine and Israel — Mending Hearts", which looked at how a heart surgery programme helped a critically sick Palestinian baby in the West Bank.

Chapter VII
Conclusions and recommendations of the Committee

84. The Committee remains convinced that a negotiated peaceful settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in all its aspects in accordance with United Nations resolutions, an urgent end to the Israeli occupation, and the realization of the rights of the Palestinian people, including to self-determination, remain central to peace and stability throughout the volatile Middle East region and should be a top priority of the international community. As has consistently emerged during the international meetings organized by the Committee, any resolution of the conflict will require a comprehensive regional solution, conceivably with support from the reinvigorated Quartet, that includes greater engagement with key Arab States and the other States concerned. The Arab Peace Initiative remains a significant contribution to such a regional settlement. The Committee is supporting those efforts and will continue its enhanced cooperation with the League of Arab States and OIC.

85. In its continued support to revitalize the peace negotiations, the Committee aligns itself with the view that the previous paradigm of bilateral negotiations, which after more than two decades have not yielded any success, should be revised. There is a need to obtain a firm commitment from Israel with regard to the two-State solution on the basis of the pre-1967 borders and in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions. Serious efforts are needed between the parties to overcome their deeply entrenched mistrust, including confidence-building efforts with the support of the international community, and to demonstrate the courage and leadership that is required at this time. If the two parties do continue to seek an outcome of two neighbouring States living in peace and security, but are unable themselves at this juncture to agree on a meaningful framework to resume negotiations, the international community must consider presenting such a framework, including parameters. In that regard, it is the primary responsibility of the Security Council, under the Charter of the United Nations, to play its role in defining a new peace architecture for resolving the conflict. The Committee urges the Security Council and the General Assembly to give positive consideration to all proposals that endeavour to present a way out of the current impasse. The Committee intends to contribute to a healthy and necessary discussion of these issues via its programme of work.

86. The Committee notes that the reconstruction of Gaza has now commenced, one year after the devastating war. However, the pace of reconstruction remains inadequately slow and the humanitarian and security situation is fragile; clean water, sanitation and electricity are still scarce and the tens of thousands of Palestinians who were rendered homeless and destitute by the conflict remain so. Immediate steps are needed to solidify the ceasefire and to accelerate reconstruction efforts, focusing on the physical rebuilding and delivery of affordable energy and sufficient water and the amelioration of dire socioeconomic conditions. Continued donor funding has to be secured for the long term, including for UNRWA. There is need for continued funding for the Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism. Ultimately, in order to ensure respect for the rights of the Palestinian people, prevent deterioration beyond the breaking point and break the build-destroy-rebuild cycle, the Israeli blockade on the Gaza Strip must end and there must be a lifting of all closures within the

framework of Security Council resolution 1860 (2009). Palestinian reconciliation is also essential, and a Palestinian unity government has to take up governance and security functions in Gaza and exercise control over the crossings. The Committee reiterates its calls upon the United Nations members and observers to provide generous support to UNRWA, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, UNDP, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Food Programme (WFP) and other organizations working on the ground to alleviate the catastrophic conditions and to expedite the Gaza reconstruction efforts.

87. The Committee reiterates that violations of humanitarian and human rights law have to be investigated and that the perpetrators should be brought to justice. The primary responsibility for such investigations rests with the Member States but they could be conducted by relevant United Nations and other international bodies if necessary. The Committee welcomed the fact-finding mission established by the Human Rights Council and the report of the United Nations Independent Commission of Inquiry on the 2014 Gaza Conflict (A/HRC/29/52) as important steps towards achieving accountability for violations of humanitarian and human rights law. The findings and recommendations of the report should be vigorously followed up on by the relevant bodies and authorities with a view to ending impunity.

88. The Committee welcomes the accession by the State of Palestine to additional international conventions and treaties, including the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, and encourages its Government to take all steps towards full compliance with those instruments, to the extent allowed by the constraints imposed by the Israeli occupation. As became apparent during the legal round table organized by the Committee, the signature by the State of Palestine of additional international instruments can help to strengthen the rule of law and uphold human rights domestically, while making it possible to pursue justice and accountability for Palestinian victims through available international legal mechanisms. The Committee stands ready to further contribute to capacity-building in this area through its training programme for staff of the Government of the State of Palestine.

89. The Committee underscores the responsibility of States and private entities not to contribute to grave Israeli violations of Palestinian human rights, particularly in respect of settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. It welcomes in that regard the appropriate stance of the European Union on the importation of products from settlements and encourages the European Union and other organizations and States to adopt and implement other such policies that guarantee adherence to international conventions in regard of illegal settlements in occupied areas, particularly the Fourth Geneva Convention. It welcomes further steps taken by Governments and private businesses to dissociate themselves from policies that directly or indirectly support settlements.

90. Through its mandated activities, the Committee will continue to generate heightened international awareness of the question of Palestine and international support for the rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to self-determination and independence. In that connection, the Committee emphasizes the useful contribution of the Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat in support of its mandate. It notes with satisfaction:

(a) the sustained level of dialogue, engagement and support on the part of the international community for the programme's objectives, as evidenced by the number of and participation in international meetings and conferences, and commemorations of the International Day and Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People; (b) the continued involvement of civil society organizations in support of the efforts of the Committee and the United Nations towards a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine; and (c) an increase in international awareness of the United Nations policies and activities on the question of Palestine, as evidenced by the increased number of visitors to the Question of Palestine website and followers of social media sites maintained by the Division. The Committee also considers that the annual training programme for staff of the Government of the State of Palestine, carried out annually by the Division, has proved its usefulness, as it directly contributes to Palestinian capacity-building efforts. The Committee expresses its appreciation for the funding of the programme in 2015 by the OPEC Fund for International Development and strongly recommends that this important mandated activity be continued and, where possible, further expanded.

91. The Committee will focus its programme of international meetings and conferences in 2016, to be implemented by the Division, on amplifying international support for the achievement of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, stressing the role and responsibility of the United Nations in that regard and in this year of the seventieth anniversary of the Organization. The Committee intends to work closely with other United Nations actors on the ground, such as the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and UNRWA, to synergize efforts in fields of common concern. The Committee will also continue to examine the legal aspects of the question of Palestine.

92. The Committee will continue to mobilize support for Palestinian institution-building and all other efforts to support and enhance the viability of the State of Palestine. It will reach out to and engage Governments, parliamentarians and civil society to mobilize support for a just solution to all permanent status issues, including the question of refugees, based on principles of international law and relevant United Nations resolutions, including General Assembly resolution 194 (III). It will pay particular attention to the inclusion and empowerment of women and young people and their organizations.

93. The Committee highly values civil society initiatives in support of the Palestinian people. It will expand its efforts to engage with all the supporters of a just and peaceful solution to the question of Palestine, including in Israel. The Committee encourages civil society partners to work with their national Governments, parliamentarians and other institutions with a view to gaining their full support for the work of the United Nations, including that of the Committee, on the question of Palestine.

94. The Committee looks forward to further developing its cooperation with parliamentarians and their umbrella organizations. Parliamentarians have a special responsibility to ensure that their Governments actively promote and support the realization of a peaceful and just solution of the question of Palestine and uphold their obligations under international law, including humanitarian and human rights law. It will continue its outreach to new audiences such as local governments, which also have an important role to play in promoting the rights

of the Palestinian people and the responsibilities of Governments to adhere to international humanitarian and human rights laws and conventions.

95. The Committee will reach out to all regional groups at the United Nations with a view to expanding its membership. It will actively work to organize more thematic debates on the question of Palestine in various United Nations forums. Recognizing the growing importance of developing countries and regional and subregional organizations, it will make a special effort to step up engagement with those countries and organizations in its work.

96. The Committee requests the Division to continue its substantive and secretariat support, the programme of research, monitoring and publications and other informational activities, in support of the Committee's communication strategy. The Division should pay special attention to continued development of the "Question of Palestine" portal, the preparation of publications and information materials on various aspects of the question of Palestine and their widest possible dissemination, including in the official languages of the United Nations, and the use of web-based social information networks, such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. It should also continue to develop the UNISPAL document collection by reflecting current issues and events, as well as by continuing to digitize and upload historical documents and to add user-friendly search features. The Division should continue to collaborate with the United Nations Libraries at Headquarters and in Geneva in the search for historic documents. It should explore opportunities to expand the breadth and scope of the annual training programme for staff of the Government of the State of Palestine, paying special attention to the programme's gender balance, such as expanding the pool of potential participants to all offices and departments of the Government and optimizing the use of resources to allow the maximum number of participants possible. Continued voluntary contributions from member and observer States and international organizations in line with their capacity, such as from the OPEC Fund for International Development in 2015, are to be encouraged to put the programme on a solid financial footing.

97. The Division should continue to organize the annual observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

98. The Committee is of the view that the special information programme on the question of Palestine of the Department of Public Information has made an important contribution to informing the media and the public of the relevant issues. It requests the continuation of the programme, with the necessary flexibility warranted by developments relevant to the question of Palestine.

99. Wishing to make its contribution to the achievement of a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine, and in view of the many difficulties facing the Palestinian people and their leadership and besetting the peace process, the Committee calls upon all States to join it in this endeavour and to extend their cooperation and support to the Committee, and invites the General Assembly again to recognize the importance of its role and to reconfirm its mandate.

Annex

Economic costs of the Israeli occupation for the Palestinian people

Note by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

A. Introduction and objective

1. The year 2015 marks the forty-eighth year of Israel's occupation of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Despite numerous United Nations resolutions and condemnations of the illegal occupation of the Palestinian territory, little has been achieved to end the occupation and its damaging impacts. On the contrary, illegal settlements continue to expand and new ones are being built, the settler population is increasing, and the detrimental consequences are now engrained in the daily lives of the Palestinian population under occupation.

2. In recognition of this fact, on 25 November 2014, the General Assembly adopted resolution 69/20, in which it requested the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) to report to the Assembly on the economic costs of the Israeli occupation for the Palestinian people.

3. The objective of the present annex is to partially respond to that request. Reporting the cost of the occupation is, however, a substantial and multi-year task and requires more resources than are presently available to UNCTAD. The Conference therefore carried out preliminary work to reflect on how the task could be implemented; highlight historical precedents relating to similar situations; outline the scope and periodicity of the task; and assess the resources required to implement it. Specifically, the annex is aimed at providing Member States with background and the resource requirements for UNCTAD to fulfil the request contained in paragraph 9 of General Assembly resolution 69/20 and perform this task on a regular basis.

4. Hence, the annex does not contain a report on the qualitative and quantitative aspects of the cost of the occupation; rather, it underscores for Member States the critical importance of such an assignment and the need to equip the international community with an objective understanding of the effects of the occupation on the Palestinian people as a step towards achieving peace with justice and dignity.

B. Some perspectives on the economics of the occupation

5. Throughout history, colonization and military occupations have consistently had economic objectives and consequences. They take various shapes and forms, but always involve the exploitation, impoverishment, marginalization, displacement and appropriation of resources of the occupied indigenous people.

6. In almost all types of occupation, the economic dimension could be described as acts and measures taken by the occupier to appropriate assets, natural resources and economic benefits that rightfully belong to the colonized people. These acts often deprive the people under colonial rule of the internationally recognized human right to development by confiscating their national resources, preventing them from

accessing and utilizing those resources, depriving them of the ability to produce and thus forcing them to consume products produced by the occupier. These actions represent only a partial aspect of the economic costs incurred by the people under occupation. Equally damaging are the measures and policies that undermine the capacity of the occupied people to conduct normal trade and economic and social transactions with neighbours and traditional trading partners and to move freely within their country and territories.

C. Key references and historical precedents

7. This section highlights some relevant precedents where economic costs were taken into account as key elements for negotiating durable solutions to complex and intractable conflicts.

8. The United Nations Fact-finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict, which was established by the President of the Human Rights Council on 3 April 2009, concluded in its report to the General Assembly (A/HRC/12/48) that Israel's continuing occupation emerged as the fundamental factor underlying violations of international law and undermining prospects for development and peace.

9. The costs of the Israeli occupation have been staggering and are mounting. They continue to increase despite numerous United Nations resolutions calling for the dismantlement of the settlements and an end to the losses and suffering incurred by the Palestinian people. Equally relevant, in the context of economic development in conflict situations, are the international law statutes and principles and the international human rights and humanitarian law that deal with redress and reparation payments to injured parties in conflict situations. Resolutions, measures and precedents that should also apply to Palestinians under occupation include the following:

(a) **Decision by the Permanent Court of International Justice of 1928 in the landmark case concerning the factory at Chorzów.** It was determined in this decision that States are responsible for making reparation (return to status quo ante) for their breaches of international law;[a]

(b) **General Assembly resolution 194 (III).** This resolution has served and continues to serve as the legal cornerstone for Palestinians on the refugee question and on compensation. The oft-cited resolution was adopted on 11 December 1948 during the ongoing mass displacement of Palestinians from areas that fell under Israeli control. The General Assembly has consistently reaffirmed the applicability of resolution 194 (III) to the settlement of refugee questions and compensation;

(c) **Pinheiro Principles.** More recently, the post-Cold War era witnessed significant normative and practical developments in the area of durable solutions for refugees and reparation payments. Numerous conflicts involving the mass displacement of persons and damages to property and people were resolved through agreements in the 1990s, including in Afghanistan, Cyprus, Guatemala and the former Yugoslavia. Several mass claim schemes were also implemented during this period to remedy human rights abuses, displacement and loss of property. Notable examples are the establishment of the Commission for Real Property Claims of

[a] See http://www.icj-cij.org/pcij/serie_A/A_09/28_Usine_de_Chorzow_Competence_Arret.pdf.

Displaced Persons and Refugees in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo and the United Nations Compensation Commission for the victims of Iraq's invasion of Kuwait;[b]

(d) **Advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.** The advisory opinion reaffirmed the principle of compensation and reparations to injured parties for actions of States that breach international law.[c]

D. Need for an assessment of the economic cost of occupation

10. It follows from the precedents listed above that there is a cost borne by the people under occupation and those suffering damage from the actions of the occupying authority.[d] Compensation for this cost, however, should not be considered as a price or a substitute to ending occupation. On the contrary, it is an essential remedy that should accompany steps towards reversing the negative impacts and economic distortions of occupation.

11. However, to this day, there is no systematic assessment or comprehensive record of the economic costs and consequences of the actions, measures and positions of Israel as an occupying Power in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Thus far, all the analyses performed and efforts made to quantify the cost of occupation have been done on an ad hoc basis, mostly by UNCTAD. Efforts made include the following:

(a) Since the mid-2000s, UNCTAD has prepared a number of studies and reports focusing on various aspects of the cost of occupation, such as the economic cost of the destruction of productive capacities, fiscal losses, the Israeli closure policy in the West Bank and the blockade in Gaza, the loss of Palestinian policy space and the Israeli control of Palestinian land, water and other natural resources;[e]

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[b] See the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, A/CONF.183/9 of 17 July 1998; Principles on Housing and Property Restitution for Refugees and Displaced Persons, E/CN.4/Sub.2/2005/17, June 2005; and Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Remedy and Reparation for Victims of Gross Violations of International Human Rights Law and Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law, General Assembly resolution 60/147 of 16 December 2005.

[c] See www.icj-cij.org/docket/files/131/1671.pdf.

[d] See A/AC.25/W.81/Rev.2 (Annex I of March 1950 and II of October 1949), entitled "Historical precedents for restitution of property or payment of compensation to refugees" and "Compensation to refugees for loss of or damage to property to be made good under principles of international law or in equity", respectively, and General Assembly resolution 194 (III) of 11 December 1948.

[e] See UNCTAD study entitled "Palestinian fiscal revenue leakage to Israel under the Protocol on Economic Relations", available from unctad.org/en/PublicationsLibrary/gdsapp2013d1_en.pdf. See also the reports on UNCTAD assistance to the Palestinian people for 2008 (TD/B/55/2), 2010 (TD/B/57/4), 2011 (TD/B/58/4) and 2012 (TD/B/59/2), as well as UNCTAD/GDS/APP/2008/1 of May 2009 entitled "Policy Alternatives for Sustained Palestinian Development and State Formation", available from unctad.org/en/Docs/gdsapp20081_en.pdf.

(b) In 2013, the World Bank provided partial estimates of the cost of occupation of Area C (61 per cent of the West Bank) in a report entitled *West Bank and Gaza: Area C and the future of the Palestinian economy*;[f]

(c) The United Nations Register of Damage Caused by the Construction of the Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, established in 2007 (General Assembly resolution ES-10/17), focuses only on the damage emanating from the construction of the Israeli separation barrier within the West Bank;

(d) The Palestinian National Authority estimated the cost of Israeli occupation related to the heavy restrictions imposed on the Palestinian people and their lack of ownership and access to their own natural resources;[g]

(e) In the information brief entitled "Palestinian Losses in 1948: Calculating Refugee Compensation", Atif Kubursi elaborated on the rights of refugees in terms of restitution of property and compensation for lost opportunity, in line with General Assembly resolution 194 (III). The assessment focused on the property and human capital losses of the Palestinian refugees.[h]

E. Concept of losses and their typology

12. Not all the occupation-related costs can be measured in monetary terms; for example, no dollar value can be assigned to the distress and agony of the loss and destruction of life, community, culture, shelter or a homeland, or the detention of a human being without due process and legal justification. Assessment of the cost of the occupation to the Palestinian people can be, at best, a partial measurement of the losses/costs incurred since the onset of the occupation.

13. The typology of the costs incurred by the Palestinian people under occupation that followed from the "de-development" policies imposed on the Palestinian economy calls for identifying, monitoring and measuring these losses in a systematic and periodical manner. The list includes but is not restricted to physical losses; loss of water and other natural resources; opportunity and economic losses; specific macroeconomic and fiscal losses; non-specific/miscellaneous macro- and micro-losses; human capital losses; loss of community and neighbourhood; and psychosocial losses.

14. The identification and quantification of each of these losses lie at the core of assessing the "cost of occupation". For each type of loss, the conceptual question is twofold: (a) What actions taken by the occupation authorities can be considered harmful to the economy (the costs of which are borne by all the individuals of the Palestinian people)?; (b) What monetary value can be assigned to each action taken by the occupation authorities (and therefore be a fair assessment of the cost of the occupation)? Obviously, such quantification will be complex and multidimensional, requiring expertise in economics, law, history and politics.

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[f] See http://www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2014/01/23/000442464_20140123122135/Rendered/PDF/AUS29220REPLAC0EVISION0January02014.pdf.

[g] Palestinian Ministry of National Economy, Applied Research Institute — Jerusalem, *The Economic Costs of the Israeli Occupation for the Occupied Palestinian Territory*, September 2011. Available from www.un.org/depts/dpa/qpal/docs/2012Cairo/p2%20jad%20isaac%20e.pdf.

[h] Atif A. Kubursi, *Palestinian Losses in 1948: Calculating Refugee Compensation* (Washington, D.C., Center for Policy Analysis on Palestine, 2001).

F. Institutional set-up and budget implications

15. In the light of its existing mandate, UNCTAD is the only United Nations entity with proven expertise on the Palestinian economy, its constraints and development prospects; it is therefore well-positioned to assume the responsibilities of the evaluation of the economic cost of the occupation. However, this task cannot be implemented with the resources presently available to UNCTAD. Additional resources are required for the Conference to fulfil the request contained in General Assembly resolution 69/20. The assignment of these additional resources should be established through the appropriate United Nations mechanisms.

16. A preliminary assessment of the resources required to fulfil this task indicates that the establishment phase (the first three years) would require extrabudgetary resources to involve four or five internationally renowned experts and cover the cost of all other related activities. The maintenance of the monitoring capacity in the first and subsequent years would require augmenting the existing capacity of UNCTAD by three Professional staff members and one General Service staff member. Moreover, an annual regular budget would be required to cover the cost of recruiting consultants and staff travel.

G. Recommendations

17. Building on General Assembly resolution 69/20, it is recommended to allocate to UNCTAD, through the appropriate mechanisms, the resources required to institutionalize the stocktaking function and gather the documentary evidence by keeping a real-time record based on measuring the costs of occupation on a timely basis within the United Nations system.

18. With a view to facilitating future negotiations for a sustainable, just and peaceful settlement of the conflict, it is recommended that UNCTAD estimate the historical and recurrent economic costs of occupation in a systematic, scientific and evidence-based way on a regular basis, and that it regularly document, update and keep an inventory of historical and new actions taken by the occupying Power, particularly those that have a damaging economic impact on the Palestinian people, their livelihood and their immediate and future ability to maintain a viable and efficient economy.

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